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FM AMEMBASSY YEREVAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5166
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1229
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C O N F I D E N T I A L YEREVAN 000361

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/28/2017

TAGS: PREL TU AM

SUBJECT: ARMENIA-TURKEY: PM FUNERAL AND AKTAMAR CHURCH
DELEGATIONS

REF: A) YEREVAN 356 B) YEREVAN 344 C) ANKARA 687 D)

ANKARA 642 E) ANKARA-YEREVAN E-MAILS

Classified By: CDA A.F. Godfrey, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: DFM Kirakossian told us March 27 that Deputy Culture Minister's delegation to Aktamar Church opening departed by bus early March 27 in order to reach the March 29 ceremony in time. GOT offers to allow a direct air link did not arrive in time for this to be a viable option. Separately, Kirakossian had heard directly from Turkish Ambassador to Georgia Tezger that Tezger would lead Turkey's delegation to the Margarian funeral. END SUMMARY

¶2. (C) AKTAMAR/HOLY CROSS CHURCH: It became clear in our March 27 afternoon meeting that last-minute negotiations in Ankara seeking permission for a direct Yerevan-Van flight for the GOAM delegation had been overtaken by events. Lacking any assurance of a direct connection, the delegation, headed by Deputy Culture Minister Gagik Gyurjian, had to leave early March 27 to ensure it would reach Van in time for the ceremony. They did so, travelling by bus for a two-day journey by way of Georgia, intending to overnight in the Turkish city of Kars. Kirakossian made the point to us that Van was only 140km from Yerevan, a two-hour trip if driven directly, he claimed. Meanwhile, local media reported that the Catholicos had decided not to send an Armenian Apostolic Church representative to the ceremony, out of displeasure with the apparent GOT intention to retain Holy Cross Church as a museum, rather than have the church re-consecrated as a place of worship. (We confirmed the Armenian church's position with its director of international relations.)

¶3. (C) PM MARGARIAN FUNERAL: Contradicting earlier discussions (Ref E) that the GOT might send its MFA Undersecretary or a Deputy Undersecretary to PM Margarian's funeral, DFM Kirakossian's information from Turkish Ambassador to Georgia Tezger (as heard, full name unknown to us), that Tezger himself would lead a delegation of three Turkish diplomats. There would be no representative from Ankara. Subsequent information received from Embassy Ankara corroborated this news.

GODFREY